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EC launches new proposal for Animal Welfare at slaughter or killing

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Report Highlights:

On 18 September 2008, the Commission (EC) published a proposal for a Council Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing. This Regulation is intended to replace Council Directive 93/119/EEC and would also apply to eligible exporters to the EU. It will not only apply to slaughterhouses, but also to hatcheries and on farm killing of fur animals, emergency killings and killings for animal disease reasons.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
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New proposal for Animal Welfare at slaughter

On 18 September 2008, the Commission (EC) published a [proposal](#)¹ for a Council Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing. The proposed regulation will enhance the technical requirements of Directive 93/119/EC² on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing, which have not been amended since 1993. However, the context for killing farm animals has considerably changed since then. The main specific problems identified with the present EU legislation are the lack of harmonized methodology for new stunning methods, the lack of clear responsibilities for operators on animal welfare, the insufficient competence of personnel handling animals and insufficient conditions for the welfare of animals during killing for disease control purposes. The adoption of the "Hygiene Regulation Package"³, which emphasizes the responsibilities of the food business operators on food safety, has also changed the legal environment for slaughterhouses. Furthermore, the first Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals⁴, adopted by the EC in 2006, introduced new concepts such as the welfare indicators and the need for further research programs and centers of reference on animal welfare. Also, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) adopted two scientific opinions in 2004⁵ and 2006⁶ on the different stunning and killing methods to be used for main farm species either for slaughter for human consumption or for disease control purposes. The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) in 2005 also adopted two international guidelines⁷ on the welfare of animals at slaughter.

Result of impact assessment and stakeholder consultations

An [Impact assessment report](#)⁸, investigating four options for the upgrade of Directive 93/119/EC, preceded the proposed regulation. Five specific objectives were identified:

- (1) Develop a common methodological approach to encourage innovation for stunning/killing animals.
- (2) Ensure a better integration of animal welfare concerns in the production process.
- (3) Ensure that the design of slaughterhouses facilities or infrastructures respect the welfare of animals;
- (4) Increase the level of competence of operators as well as facilitate the access to technical and scientific information on animal welfare.
- (5) Improve the protection of animals at killing operations performed on a large scale (as for disease control purpose).

The option of a Regulation to replace Directive 93/119/EC is expected to guarantee better harmonization of new approaches to meet the identified objectives through the following suggestions:

- (1) Develop a common methodological approach for approving new stunning methods.

¹ COM (2008)553/3 - http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/slaughter/proposal_en.pdf

² OJ L 340, 31.12.1993, p. 21.

³ See USEU webpage on [Food Hygiene](http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/foodsafety.html) - <http://useu.usmission.gov/agri/foodsafety.html>

⁴ See GAIN [E36031](#) - <http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200603/146176986.pdf>

⁵ *The EFSA Journal* (2004), 45, 1-29, Welfare aspects of the main systems of stunning and killing the main commercial species of animals.

⁶ *The EFSA Journal* (2006) 326, 1-18, "The welfare aspects of the main systems of stunning and killing applied to commercially farmed deer, goats, rabbits, ostriches, ducks, geese and quail.

⁷ See http://www.oie.int/eng/normes/mcode/en_titre_3.7.htm

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/slaughter/impact_assessment_report.pdf

- (2) Ensure better integration of animal welfare concerns into the production process through the requirement of Standard Operating Procedures and the appointment of Animal Welfare Officers (AWO) in slaughterhouses.
- (3) Upgrade the standards governing slaughterhouse construction and equipment.
- (4) Introduce a requirement for a certificate of competence of the operators and officials concerned, as well as mandatory training for personnel operating the restraining and stunning of animals.
- (5) Improve the protection of animals during mass killing operations with the introduction of a harmonized methodology.

The new requirements will not only apply to the killing of animals in slaughterhouses, but also to hatcheries, the on farm killing of fur animals, slaughter for on farm consumption, emergency killings or mass killing for animal disease reasons. Ritual slaughter for religious reasons would continue to be exempted from the stunning requirement. The proposed regulation will not cover the killing of farmed fish, but this will be subject of a later legislative initiative.

A [Press release](#)⁹ and a [Citizen's Summary](#)¹⁰ are available at the [EC website](#)¹¹.

Timeline for approval/implementation and extension to countries exporting to the EU

The EC proposal has been forwarded to the European Parliament (EP) and the EU Council of Ministers and will follow the "consultation" procedure. The Council is in charge of the approval of the final content of the regulation, after the EP has issued its non-binding opinion. The approval of the proposed regulation is expected by the end of 2009. The implementation is provisionally scheduled for the beginning of 2012, as an additional 24-months'-transition period is given to stakeholders and Member States to adapt and comply with the new provisions. Existing slaughterhouses would need to adapt infrastructure by the beginning of 2019.

These new animal welfare requirements at slaughter intend apply to exporting establishments from third countries through the incorporation of these requirements in Hygiene Regulation (EC) No 854/2004 governing the eligibility of establishments. However, this EC proposal has not been notified to the WTO yet.

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⁹ <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1371&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN>

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/slaughter/citizen_summary.pdf

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/slaughter/ce_proposal_animal_time_killing_en.htm

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